SOME ASPECTS OF PRO-FRENCH SENTIMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA, 1790-1800

EDWARD G. EVERETT

By 1790 Pennsylvania had made the cyclical swing from the democracy of Revolutionary times to the conservatism of Federalist leadership. Beneath the surface of events remained a spirit molded by "republican plainness." ¹

This political structure was to be shattered and reshaped by the impact of the French Revolution. Within a few weeks after the setting up of the new government there began a series of events in France that democratized France and America. In America this movement stirred political passions, "leveled" American society, and helped to create the lines of party demarcation. Strange as it may seem, the center of this Francophile spirit was Philadelphia, and from this town was disseminated pro-French sentiments through societies, newspapers, and political units.

Mainly, Pennsylvanians viewed the French Revolution as a continuation of their own struggle for liberty. The reaction of the Francophiles early in 1793 was to arouse a feeling of hostility to ceremonious form and display on the part of public officers. Washington took the brunt of these attacks, for in Pennsylvania he was charged with aristocratic tendencies for his levees, his aloofness in public, and his coach.² Two points of attack developed against Washington in 1793: first, an effort was made in Congress to substitute for the head of Washington on the national coins "an emblematical figure of Liberty" and, second, opposition arose to the Pennsylvania Assembly having postponed their ball until President Washington's birthday. The Francophiles denounced the militia officers for waiting on the president on his birthday as an idolatrous

Dr. Everett, a frequent contributor to The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, is Professor of History at West Chester State College.—Ed.

² J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, History of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 472; American Daily Advertiser, January 9, 1794; see also "Veritas" in National Gazette, June 7, 8, 1793.
affair. His foreign policy was attacked; urgent petitions circulated throughout Pennsylvania "to give at once to the commerce of France with America, in drawing henceforth from the United States the greatest part of the subsistence and stores necessary for the armies, fleets, and colonies of the French Republic."

Wars and rumors of wars ran riot in the state. There was talk of arming privateers, of sending troops to Canada, Louisiana, and Florida. In Philadelphia mobs ranged the streets. Years later John Adams recalled the furor: "... ten thousand people in the streets of Philadelphia, day after day, threatened to drag Washington out of his house, and effect a revolution in the government, or compel it to declare war in favor of the French Revolution and against England . . ." ³

With such Francophile sentiment within the land it would be supposed that here was a cohesive unit of Frenchmen. Such was not the case. Although there were about thirty thousand Frenchmen in the United States by 1800, with Philadelphia having a greater proportion than any other city, the great majority were either émigrés from France or fugitives from the uprising of the blacks in San Domingo. Thus these French nationals were antagonistic to the principles of the French Revolution. ⁴ This demarcation of affiliation was evident in the French societies of Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia the Friends of Liberty and Equality was truly a Jacobin club that engaged in recruiting a French army for the west. Anthony DuPlaine and Peter Barriere were leaders in this society. It is interesting to know that the French Benevolent Society was denounced in Pennsylvania as "traitorous and aristocratic" in helping émigrés and San Domingo refugees.⁵ Named among the leaders of the French Patriotic Societies are Gayetan Aiguier, Francois Maurice, Paul Bentalou, Peter S. DuPonceau and Anthony DuPlaine.

It is interesting that the Federalists in Pennsylvania, indeed, in America, made no distinction among the émigrés, the refugee from San Domingo, or the revolutionist. The name "French" covered a

---
³ John Adams to Jefferson, June 30, 1813, in John Adams, Works (ed. by Charles F. Adams—Boston, 1850-56), X, 47. See also Adams to Van der Kemp, February 18, 1794, Folio AM006 in Francis Adrian Van der Kemp papers, in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, hereafter called H.S.P.
⁴ John C. Miller, Crisis in Freedom (Boston, 1952), 42; it is rather interesting that Gallatin estimated the anti-Revolution French at 99 out of 100.
⁵ Minutes of Société Francaise des Amis de la Liberté et de l'Egalité; Scharf and Westcott, op. cit., I, 472; Francis S. Childs, French Refugee Life in the United States 1790-1800 (Baltimore, 1940), 148.
multitude of sins, always being "most vile and worthless." French became synonymous with Jacobin in Federalist eyes, and Jacobin was the epitome of loose morals, in religion and revolution. It even got to the point where a man's political views should be tested before being permitted to follow the pursuits of love. No bundling with Democrats became the variation of a theme that was preached in Pennsylvania and New England. Indeed, in no uncertain terms, the Federalist press in Philadelphia preached that to love a Democrat or Frenchman was to invite ravishment, profligacy, and debauchery. Also, with vivid passages of the imagination, Pennsylvanians were advised to remove their wives from the infernal fraternal embrace "of horrid outlandish sans-culotte Frenchmen" and from the deflowering tendencies of the Gallic rooster and vile Anti-Federalists.

Of all the areas of Pennsylvania to receive the impact of French ideas, Philadelphia became the most disturbed. It, indeed, seemed to have a lapse in its moral tone, although hardly immoral. The Quaker City by 1791 became more epicurean and frolicsome. French styles of the ci-devant royalists dominated the wardrobes and manners of the Federalist rich. Fencing masters, makers of French ices, dancing masters, managers of public baths, hairdressers, and wig makers implanted the éclat of the ancien régime in Philadelphia. French foods, music, balls, and plays filled the sensory impressions. From San Domingo came the French women of color who lived in luxurious establishments serving as courtesans to Americans, French, and French colonials. Even young Quaker maids were thrilled by Gallic serenades. All the appurtenances of Versailles found their way into Pennsylvania in the decades of the 1780's and 1790's; hotels, cosmetics, shoes, pastries, and even cabarets were imported from France. Therefore, Philadelphia's change in moral

---

7 The Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser, August 2, 1799.
8 Carlisle Gazette, January 28, 1795; Porcupine's Gazette, July 3, 1798; Pennsylvania Herald and York General Advertiser, August 1, 1798; What Is Our Situation? op. cit., 7-10; The American Museum, or Universal Magazine, 1792, 289; Philadelphia Gazette, July 6, 1799.
9 A Frenchman named Glaise in June, 1795, installed seven bath tubs in his house at 120 South Front Street. The subscription fees were $1.00 for three baths, $8.00 for a month, and $.50 for one bath. Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds., Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey, 1793-1798 (New York, 1947), 177.
tone was not the work of the revolutionary French, but rather the work of the émigré that predominated in the higher classes until the coming of sans-culotte manners to Philadelphia by 1793. From the revolutionary sans-culotte of Paris came the workmen's style of pantaloons to replace the genteel knee breeches, silk stockings, silver buckles, and queue of the well-to-do. Then in social style as in politics, there was a clash of ideologies that helped to democratize America.

To other states Pennsylvania had a mongrel air about it, made up of cantankerous elements of Scotch-Irish, Germans, "hordes of wild Irishmen," the newfangled French. Indeed Rufus King said that New England would have hanged the men who in Pennsylvania were elected to Congress. In the decade from 1790-1800 a new influx of Irishmen came to America. Most of them possessed antipathies to England that ranged from verbal opposition to revolutionary plotting. Members of the United Irishmen who had conspired with France to overthrow England came to Pennsylvania. Here men such as Wolfe Tone, Hamilton Rowan, Napper Tandy, Dr. James Reynolds, Robert Moore, John Richard McMahon, John McGuirk settled temporarily and plotted their plots, so say the Federalists, to overthrow the government in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity. To the "rich, the well-born, and able" of Pennsylvania the name Irish meant the anathema of wildness and treason.

Throughout the period from 1790 to 1798 the days of public celebration became events of ideological contention, so that democratic societies vied with aristocratic Federalism. After the year 1792 an effort was made by Federalists to supplant July 4 as a popular holiday with Washington's Birthday, aping the aristocratic traditions of royal England. Federalist criticism of July 4 is amply demonstrated in "Oliver Oldschool's" Portfolio: "The reading of

10 See "State House Garden" (1798) and "State House Yard" (1799) by William Birch in Philadelphia Free Library. James Monroe was the last of the presidents to cling to genteel knee breeches; a good picture of this transition is the sketch by Lewis Miller, York County, "Lutheran Christening." 1805.

11 Rufus King, The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, ed., by Charles R. King (New York, 1894-1900), II, 371; see also Country Porcupine, November 9, 1798.

the Declaration of Independence on every anniversary of the American Republic is an improper act, as it tends to prolong in the minds of an ignorant and brutal mob animosity and hatred against a nation with which we are united by similarity of language, laws, religion, customs, and habits, and with which we reciprocate a large and lucrative commerce.” Later Joseph Dennie, the editor of this weekly, wrote: “Today Mr. Jefferson’s July paper is read by a few willing to gull the miserable populace. The farce of republicanism is acted with much Bartholomew-fair drollery. Independence is very noisy in the morning, nonsensical orations are pronounced at noon, patriotism is exceedingly drunk at night.” The antipathy for “the glorious Fourth” is partly explained by the fact that this day was the time of the “mobocracy,” when the plebeian societies of carpenters, mechanics, coopers, and cordwainers, and the democratic societies used it as a day of “common man’s remembrance of a common man’s struggle for freedom.” On this day the democratic societies of Pennsylvania carried on philanthropic donations to debtors in prison. Second only to the celebration of July 4 was Bastille Day.

Between 1793 and 1798 the symbols of the French Revolution prevailed in America. At public celebrations young girls and boys dressed in white, with tri-colored ribbons, and holding baskets of flowers, strewed flowers before processions. The Carmagnole was danced and Ca Ira and Marseillaise played. Obelisks of freedom were devised and carried by Americans and French. Branches of oak became symbols of freedom. In 1793 and 1794 in Philadelphia the British flag was even burned in Market Street. With the expansion of the Revolution in Europe, Pennsylvania journalists of pro-French sympathies aped the signs and sympathies of Gallicism. French broadsides were headlined “Vive la République.” Domestic news that would now rate first page space was limited usually to lines that were devoid of details. Foreign news, and in particular French news, dominated the front page and even succeeding pages with details. Pikes were sported by militia companies of Phila-

13 Portfolio, April 12, 1801.
14 Portfolio, July 4, 1801. Duane called this paper “Portable Foolery.”
15 American Daily Advertiser, May 5, 1794; Pennsylvania Gazette, July 1, 1799.
16 See examples in the following newspapers: Pittsburgh Tree of Liberty, July 3, November 6, 27, 1802; Pittsburgh Gazette, November 15, 1794; Carlisle Gazette, January 7, 28, 1795; Meadville Crawford Weekly Messenger, January 30, 1805; Uniontown Fayette Gazette and Union Advertiser, July 5, 1797; Washington, Pa., Herald of Liberty, May 5, 1799.
delphia; the *bonnet rouge*, symbol of liberty and freemen, appeared on the streets, on pikes and on heads. At taverns it became a custom to pass the *bonnet rouge* from person to person as each made a toast. The American and French flags appeared together. Liberty poles gained prevalence as symbols of a new liberty.\(^7\) French cockades were worn. Brawls marked the sentiments of the participants.

Even American money reflected feelings of the times. In October, 1793, the first coin struck by the mint was a copper cent bearing as a device a head of the Goddess of Liberty, hair freely streaming backward unbound; other coins followed the same device, but in 1795 the first gold eagle and half-eagle had a head of liberty wearing the *bonnet rouge*.

The term "citizen" became prevalent among Democratic-Republican militia and civilians. The First Light Infantry of Philadelphia had the name of *sans-culottes*. How far these symbols of the French Revolution went is demonstrated by this contemporary account: "Societies are being formed . . . in imitation of the Jacobin clubs; everything that is respectable in society is condemned as aristocratic; politeness is looked upon as a sort of *lese republicanisme*; the common forms of expression in use by the *sans-culottes* are adopted by their American disciples; the title 'citizen' becomes as common in Philadelphia as in Paris, and in the newspapers it is the fashion to announce marriages as partnerships between citizen Brown, Smith or Jones and the *citiess* who has been wooed to such an association." \(^8\)

Three events between 1793-1798 coalesced French sentiment in Pennsylvania: the Genet affair, proclamation of neutrality, and Jay's Treaty. Each event in itself excited so much interest throughout the state that it became the basis for partisanship. Eventually, together, they developed a cumulative power that formed the basis of issues in the formation of the Democratic-Republican party. These events and issues have been dealt with adequately by such men as F. J. Turner, George Clinton Genet, C. M. Thomas, S. F. Bemis, H. M. Tinkcom, Frank Monaghan, and others; therefore they will not be examined here. So far this article has dealt with the events that implemented

---

\(^7\) *Pennsylvania Archives*, Second Series, IV, 46, note; ibid., 389.

\(^8\) *General Advertiser*, May 17, June 30, 1794; Charles Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1897), 52.
pro-French sentiment in Pennsylvania. Now exactly what organizations took up this sentiment to disseminate it throughout the state and even the nation? The Democratic-Republicans had a penchant for organizing in taverns; here pro-French leveling sentiment and democratic principles could be organized around a pot of ale. To name just a few taverns in Philadelphia dedicated to pro-French philosophy is to understand the bibulous nature of the age: George Lesher's, Ogden's, Swan Tavern, Richardet's, Isaac Fish's, City Tavern, Oeller's Hotel. Even Pittsburgh had the General Butler Tavern, Smur's, and John Maries dedicated to the Clapboard Row Junto.

Two other important organizations that served as points of unity for disseminating politics and the pro-French feeling were the American Philosophical Society and a few educational institutions. The American Philosophical Society was composed of approximately 450 members in the period of the 1790's. Its make-up was of scientists, authors, doctors, printers, professional men. Membership to this organization was not limited to Philadelphians, neither was it limited to only Pennsylvanians, for its members came from other states and colonies. Jefferson faithfully attended the meetings of this society with John Beckley of Virginia. Francois Alexandre Frederic La Rochefoucauld, Duc de Liancourt, M. de Grandprey and Moreau de St. Méry, friends of the Revolution, were members of this society. Dr. James Tilton of Newcastle, Delaware, John Deas of Charleston, South Carolina, Samuel Vaughan and John Vaughan of Jamaica and Philadelphia were also members of this society. The leadership in the decade of the 1790's consisted of the friends of Benjamin Franklin and of young intellectuals and radicals. Foremost among these men was the scientist-philosopher-democrat David Rittenhouse who had served on the Committee of Public Safety and helped frame the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776; other old friends of Franklin were Dr. Benjamin Rush, Dr. George Logan, Dr. James Hutchinson, Dr. William Shippen, all of whom followed Franklin's tenets. The young Philadelphians in this society were Alexander J. Dallas, Benjamin Franklin Bache, Jonathan D. Sergeant, Peter S. DuPonceau. From Western Pennsylvania came David Redick, John Hoge, Dr. Absalom Baird, John Ewing, William Barton. These intellectuals in this society stirred

up democracy and pro-French sentiment. The American Philosophical Society became a fountainhead of pro-French sentiment that penetrated into the American hinterland.

The University of Pennsylvania also possessed a brilliant core of men who organized political leadership to challenge Federalism and to support the French. The greatest leader of this group was James Hutchinson, doctor, Revolutionary War veteran, brilliant professor of chemistry, and party organizer. His astute leadership is amply demonstrated in his attempt to build up party ranks through winning over the French and Irish immigrants to the Democratic-Republican party. Among the other leaders of pro-French sentiment serving as trustees or faculty members of the University of Pennsylvania were Alexander J. Dallas, Peter S. DuPonceau, Blair McClenachan, and David Rittenhouse.20 Years later John Adams recorded his impressions of Dr. Hutchinson and his colleagues in these terms: "The coolest and firmest minds, even among the Quakers in Philadelphia, have given their opinions to me, that nothing but the yellow fever, which removed Dr. Hutchinson and Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant from this world, could have saved the United States from a fatal revolution of government." 21 Also it is interesting to notice that in the minds of some people the appearance of Jacobinism and yellow fever in Philadelphia was looked upon as the wonder-working ways of Providence punishing the heretics in religion and politics. Philadelphia, in the period from August to November, 1793, became a ghost town with 17,000 people fleeing into the countryside; the yellow fever epidemic was not due to poor sanitation, in the mind of that age, but to the punishment of God, for Americans falling into the ways of the French. The Gazette of the United States, June 21, 1800, succinctly stated it in this manner: "God had sent out one as a corrective of the other. Our cities have been punished in proportion to the extent of Jacobinism; and in general at least three out of four of the persons who have perished by pestilence have been over-zealous partizans."

If the University of Pennsylvania represented the academic hub


21 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 30, 1813, Writings, ed., C. F. Adams (Boston, 1850-1856), X, 47.
of pro-French sentiment, academies and colleges in other parts of Pennsylvania held firmly to democracy, pro-French doctrines, and liberalism. Franklin College, established at Lancaster in 1787, was an outgrowth of a desire to educate the German citizenry; through the influence of the Muhlenbergs this college had strong ties with pro-French leanings and with democracy. Washington Academy seems to have been linked firmly to western radicalism, for here from 1787 to 1794 such “whiskey boys” and pro-French democrats as James Marshall, James Edgar, John M'Dowell, Absalom Baird, David Redick, and James Allison were members of the board of trustees. The most popular lawyer in Washington and eventual leader of the Whiskey Insurrection, David Bradford, was secretary of the board of trustees from 1787-1794. Books for this academy were secured from B. F. Bache's bookshop, “in preference to any other.” Furthermore three members of the Washington Democratic Society—James Allison, Colonel John Canon, and John M'Dowell—started the Canonsburg Academy (later named Jefferson College). It is remarkable that of the three colleges created in Pennsylvania previous to 1800 two had strong elements of the Democratic-Republican party and a pro-French following within them.

Another force for spreading French sympathy in Pennsylvania was the city and county militia units. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the heritage of the militia system of Pennsylvania was to be found in units of organization stemming from the American Revolution: committees of correspondence and the Associators. Thus the militia system itself, founded on county lines and possessing a democratic framework of government, became an agency for spreading social, economic, and political sentiments. In this militia system there was a chain of command that kept the people informed from the capital by passing information to the county militia and then to smaller district units. Philadelphia was the hub from which propaganda emanated.

The French-English conflict in Europe had a definite and tangible impact on Pennsylvania militia organizations. Two units

---

22 George W. Richards, German Pioneers in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1905), 55.
arose in Philadelphia as the elite corps of opposing forces: the Federalist Macpherson's Blues and Colonel John Shee's Republican Legion. Members of Shee's Legion had to take a "test" oath to attain membership. It was easy to delineate the Philadelphia militia organizations along partisan lines. Federalist units included: Macpherson's Blues, Captain McKean's Federal Horse, Dunlap's Dragoons, and at least six other companies. Democratic-Republican units included: Colonel Shee's Republican Legion, Captain Johnson's Infantry, Captain Rush's Infantry, Captain Kessler's Light Infantry, and at least eleven other distinct units of pro-French sympathies. It is readily seen that the majority of Philadelphia companies were Democratic-Republican by nature and Francophile in spirit. In Pittsburgh the two factions did not develop such clear-cut political demarcation in the make-up of militia companies. The militia of the four southwestern counties was commanded by Major General Gibson, a Federalist of Allegheny County. Needless to say the officers in the Third Division were mainly Federalists and strongly anti-French. The degree to which partisanship expressed itself is to be found in the enmity between Hugh Henry Brackenridge and James Brison—Federalist, prothonotary of Allegheny County, secretary of the board of trustees of the Pittsburgh Academy, and a captain of the Pittsburgh Troop of Light Dragoons. The political potency of the militia units of Pittsburgh is aptly demonstrated in the bombastic rivalry between Major General Presley Neville, Federalist and brigade-inspector, and General Alexander Fowler, Democratic-Republican and pro-French demagogue. From the bombastic harangues of General Fowler a number of points emerge: (1) the common soldiers in the Pittsburgh militia were mainly Republicans and (2) French symbols of the revolution (such as "citizen-soldier") emerged frequently in General Fowler's work. William Gazzam, ambitious son of Erin and supporter of Republicanism, served as brigade-major and countersigned the orders of Fowler. In conclusion it should be emphasized that one reason why Pittsburgh had such a strong anti-French leadership was found in a chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati. In Pennsylvania, as in other states, the Order of the Cincinnati in the eyes of the Democratic-Republicans was a threat to American liberties and

26 Tree of Liberty, November 1, December 6, 1800.
democracy. True in the beginning this society was created in 1783 by officers of the Continental Army to form a charitable fund for the support of needy officers and to preserve a bond of brotherhood between the officers of the American army and their French comrades-in-arms. But to the democratic west this organization was a “self-created” society of officers that perpetuated aristocratic tradition since it provided that membership should descend to the eldest son or, in failure thereof, to collateral branches which might be deemed worthy of the honor. Is it any wonder that the great democrat Thomas Jefferson branded the society as a poisonous offshoot of European aristocracy? To Pennsylvania Democratic-Republicans it was “A Race of Hereditary Patricians.”

Strong units of pro-French sentiment arose in America when Genet made his vainglorious way across the United States, leaving behind a trail of Democratic-Republican Clubs modeled upon the Revolutionary Clubs of France. Unlike the French variety, the American Democratic-Republican Clubs were not organs of bloody revolution; in principle they were dedicated to the support of liberty and democracy. In the minds of the Federalists, especially Alexander Hamilton, the pro-French sympathies of the Democratic-Republican clubs would breed revolution and chaos; for, according to Hamilton, Genet was the man who had “brought the eggs of these verminous reptiles to our shores,” and these reptilian eggs had hatched into clubs of Democratic-Republican delinquents who promised to give the United States the “Parisian horrors.” Even Washington condemned the Democratic Societies as instruments of the “French faction.” In numerous instances he scourged these societies as instruments of intrigue, sedition and disaffection. Witness the following statement: “I early gave it as my opinion to the confidential characters around me that, if these Societies were not counter-acted (not by prosecutions, the ready way to make them grow stronger) or did not fall into disesteem from the knowledge of their origin . . . that they would shake the government to its

foundation." On September 25, 1794, he wrote to Burges Hall from Philadelphia: "The insurrection in the western counties of this state . . . may be considered as the first ripe fruit of the Democratic Societies." 29

From such statements it may be concluded that the Federalists looked upon the Democratic Societies as enemies of religion, order, and economic stability. In the mind of Hamilton these clubs were Jacobin in nature, dedicated to the projection of the French Revolution into America.

In Pennsylvania the Democratic-Republican Clubs intermingled with the militia groups. As far as documentary knowledge is concerned, nine Democratic-Republican clubs were organized in Pennsylvania, three of them in Philadelphia. 31 The nerve-center of these societies was Philadelphia, and the parent society of Pennsylvania and out-of-state societies was the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania. 32 This group, on organizing, requested that its constitution be published in all newspapers. Its first circular, sent to county, state and national leaders, possessed intense pro-French feelings. A few salient lines of its January 9, 1794, resolutions were the following: "4th. Resolved that we ought to resist to the utmost of our power all attempts to alienate our affections from France, and detach us from her alliance and to connect us more intimately with Great Britain, that all persons who, directly or indirectly promote this unnatural succession, ought to be considered by every free American as enemies to republicanism and their country." 33 It is


30 Ibid., XII, 465; see also ibid., XII, 454, 486.

31 They were the German Republican Society, 1793, the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania, 1794, the True Republican Society, 1798—all of Philadelphia; Mingo Creek, the Society of United Freemen, 1794; Washington, Democratic Society; Republican Society of the Mouth of the Yough, 1794; Carlisle, Committee of Correspondence; Northumberland, the Democratic Society, 1794; Lancaster, the Republican Society, 1795.


33 Minutes of the Democratic Society (H.S.P.), 31-37.
interesting to note that the prominent meeting place of this society was "The University in Fourth Street." \(^{34}\)

It will be observed that there were three active Democratic Societies in western Pennsylvania, and of these societies it would seem that the best known and best organized was the Democratic Society of Washington, a wing of the Philadelphia Club.\(^{35}\)

In attacking the Democratic Clubs the Federalists looked upon these organizations as revolutionary appendages of France, followers of Marat, St. Just, and Robespierre. Instead they used the French slogans of liberty, equality, and fraternity to develop a homegrown product of majority rule, universal manhood suffrage, and equality before the law. So in the eyes of Hamilton and Washington the Democratic Societies produced the "French horrors" in fomenting the Whiskey Insurrection, for example. Yet, as far as is known, the Democratic Societies themselves took no part in the insurrection, although a few members of the Democratic Society of Washington County did. Indeed the publications of these Societies denounced the western rioters and counselled moderation.\(^{36}\)

An excellent example of how Hamilton twisted the truth to political advantage was the blame he placed on the Democratic Society of Washington County and by implication upon all other Democratic Societies.\(^{37}\) He identified the Democratic Society of Washington as the Mingo Creek Society which had marched on General Neville's house and planned to burn Pittsburgh; yet these societies were two separate units, neither one linked with the other, even though James Marshall and David Bradford, leaders of the rioters, were members of the Democratic Society of Washington County. They were not serving in their capacity as members of the club. Could it be that Hamilton, in identifying these two societies as one and the same organization, was trying to link all Democratic Societies?

\(^{34}\) *American Daily Advertiser*, August 12, 1793, January 5, 31, 1795.

\(^{35}\) *Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 5, 26, May 17, 1794.


Societies to the charge of treason? This would be an easy thing to do since it was known that the Washington Society took instructions and messages from the Democratic Society of Philadelphia.

Albert Gallatin estimated that nine out of ten journals published in the United States supported the Federalist dogma. In the decade 1790-1800 the power of the press was indeed in Federalist hands. There were in the United States about eight hundred deputy postmasters, each possessing the franking privilege for letters and newspapers and receiving them postage free. Needless to say Federalist newspapers went postage free while the opposition papers were assessed fees for postage and even suppressed in the post office. Emanating from Philadelphia were two first-class newspapers hewing to the pro-French and Democratic-Republican line: the Aurora, published first by Benjamin Franklin Bache ("Lightning Rod Junior") and then by Duane, and Philip Freneau's National Gazette, and the greater of these was the Aurora. The Federalists described Bache's paper as "the most noted engine for spreading filth; and spreads it over the continent like a blasting mildew, in the pestilential pages of the Aurora." No other Republican journalist could match his record. John Adams had the theory that Bache's Jacobinical leanings were derived from early exposure to French revolutionary propaganda and from having in childhood sat on Old Ben's knee. "Dr. Franklin's behavior had been so excessively complaisant to the French ministry and in my opinion had so endangered the essential interests of our country, that I had been frequently obliged to differ from him and sometimes to withstand him to his face; so that I knew he had conceived an irreconcilable hatred of me and that he had propagated and would continue to propagate prejudices, if nothing worse, against me in America from one end of it to the other. Look into Benjamin Franklin Bache's Aurora and Duane's Aurora for twenty years and see whether my expectations have not been verified."
Until the establishment of *Porcupine's Gazette* by William Cobbett in 1797, the *Gazette of the United States* was the leading Federalist organ, subsidized by the party and Alexander Hamilton, and under the editorship of the Fenos. The younger, John Fenno, Jr., declared that the purpose of his paper was to oppose the designs of "aspiring and restless demagogues; to fortify the existing ramparts of the constitution and laws, and to raise new bulwarks in those quarters where . . . the raging madness of Jacobinism may have effected breeches in the barrier round the public weal." 41 Here was an organ that was a match for the *Aurora* in blasphemy, viciousness, and rasping name-calling, daily doing strident battle with "the monster of Jacobinism."

Equal to the Fenos in his battle against Jacobinism was William Cobbett. As the influence of the *Gazette of the United States* declined, after the death of John Fenno, September 14, 1798, *Porcupine's Gazette* became for a time the leading Federalist paper in Philadelphia. Equally important in expressing his hatred for France and love for England were his twenty pamphlets published between 1794 and 1800. The tenor of his opinions can best be demonstrated by his statement in regard to French aliens: "Were I president, I would hang them or they should murder me." 42 Only Benjamin Rush's suit for libel against Cobbett silenced his paper in 1799. He denounced the "sovereign people of Philadelphia . . . as the most malicious and most cowardly race in existence," consigned them to perdition, and then sailed for Europe after a brief sojourn in New York City where he made an abortive attempt to publish a periodical called *The Rushlight*. 43

It is obvious that the Philadelphia press was a powerful agency for dispersing partisan feelings and pro-French and anti-French sentiments, not only in Philadelphia but also throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, and of all papers Bache's *Aurora* was the most fervent and widespread of the Democratic-Republican papers.

Western Pennsylvania was fortunate in obtaining in 1786 the first newspaper west of the Allegheny Mountains. This was achieved mainly through Hugh Henry Brackenridge. The paper championed

41 *Gazette of the United States*, May 14, 1800.
42 *Porcupine's Gazette*, July 19, 1799; see also issues January 25, 1798; August 22; September 13, 1799; *Aurora*, August 2, 1800; Elizabeth Drinker, *Journal*, December 17, 1799.
43 *Aurora*, February 28, 1800; June 11, 1801.
the Federalist cause, and John Scull, the editor, created a literary alliance with Brackenridge, political and literary critic. By October, 1799, the two partners had come to the separation of the ways when Scull denied the critics of the Adams administration the use of his paper.44

Brackenridge found his printer in John D. Israel, publisher of the *Herald of Liberty* in Washington, Pennsylvania. On August 16, 1800, Israel published the *Tree of Liberty* in a building on Clapboard Row owned by Mr. Brackenridge. The *Tree of Liberty* became as a sword in the hands of the Republicans; no Federalist was safe from its attacks. The title of the *Tree of Liberty* was emblazoned with a large name in semi-Gothic script and a rebus in the form of a stately tree covered with luxuriant foliage—with numerous heads lying among the roots of the tree, symbols of revolution of John Scull. It irritated John Scull so much that he could not help but question Brackenridge as to the persons whose heads had been severed and laid under the tree: “We suggest the propriety of adding a Guillotine to the Tree, and a headless trunk or two in the background, together with Judge Marat smiling and enjoying the carnage—French things should be completely French!!” 45

The *Tree* took its cue from other Democratic newspapers, for it published many accounts from the *Aurora*. The measure of this paper’s political influence is found in the actual area covered by its circulation. The *Tree* as a democratic organ penetrated western Pennsylvania as far as Erie, Crawford, Venango, Warren, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.46

Between 1795 and 1800 other Democratic-Republican newspapers of strong French sentiments were established in western Pennsylvania: the *Herald of Liberty* at Washington, the *Farmers’ Register* at Greensburg, and a German edition of the *Farmers’ Register*, the first German paper published west of the mountains.47

April, 1798, marked the beginning of the decline of pro-French sentiment in Pennsylvania, for it was on April 3, 1798, that John Adams submitted to the Congress assembled at Philadelphia the XYZ correspondence, which aroused American public feeling against France, regardless of party. The *Ca Ira* was silent on the streets

44 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 2, November 30, December 7, 1799.
45 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 29, 1800.
46 *Tree of Liberty*, November 15, December 5, 1800.
47 *Farmers’ Register*, September 28, 1799.
of Philadelphia; Joseph Hopkinson's *Hail Columbia*, written to the air of *The President's March*, became very popular.\(^{48}\) Crowds of young people wearing the black cockade roamed the streets engaging in all sorts of mob action. The French cockade began to disappear. Against this background of fervent agitation brewed the rumors of Jacobin plots to burn Philadelphia and to attack Pennsylvania. May 8, 1798, had been designated as a day for fasting and prayer, but instead it became a day of agitation and disorder. Rumor had it that this day was to mark the end of Philadelphia, when the people were seeking divine guidance. Forty men loitering about the President's house were attacked by a mob wearing the black cockade. From a window, John Adams watched the riot with perturbation: “Market Street was as full as men could stand by one another, and even before my doors . . . when some of my domestics, in frenzy, determined to sacrifice their lives in my defence.” John Adams quickly ordered that chests of arms be brought down the lanes and alleys to the President's house. Thousands of Philadelphians amassed themselves before the President's door affording a barrier of defense. A vigilance committee patrolled the streets to restore order.\(^{49}\)

The French cockade began to disappear. In June, 1798, Bache brought the hot coals of criticism down upon his head by publishing in the *Aurora* Talleyrand's conciliatory letter to the American envoys, before it had been released by the state department and before it had even been placed before the President. Sentiment was so high that patriotic Philadelphians denounced Bache as a French agent and traitor.\(^ {50}\) Overnight John Adams had become a hero; petitions and pledges of allegiance flowed into Philadelphia.\(^ {51}\) July 4, 1798, was a bombastic celebration replete with military parades, the drinking of toasts, and the flaunting of bibulous challenges to the “Gallic Cock.” The black cockade had become a dominant symbol of patriotic affection. On July 14, Moreau de St. Méry recorded in his journal: “Antagonism against the French increased daily. I was the only person in Philadelphia who con-

\(^{48}\) *Aurora*, April 27, May 5, 1798. Bache described Hopkinson's song as “the most ridiculous bombast and the vilest adulation of the Anglo-monarchical party and the two Presidents.”


\(^{50}\) Benjamin Bache, *Truth Will Out* (Philadelphia, 1798), 1-3; *Aurora*, June 25, 1798; *Gazette of the United States*, July 19, 1798; see also *ibid.*, June 20, 22, 1798.

continued to wear a French cockade. Soon thereafter the Republicans, fearing acts of violence on the part of the Federalists, met secretly and took steps to defend themselves. Since I was a party to these meetings, I was given keys to two shelters in which I and my family could take refuge in case my own house should be attacked."

The pro-French element had indeed gone underground. "People acted as though a French invasion force might land in America at any moment. Everybody was suspicious of everybody else; everywhere one saw murderous glances." Nevertheless, the Aurora kept to its principles in spreading conciliatory and pro-French sentiments throughout Pennsylvania.

Aping the spirit of Philadelphia, western Pennsylvania divested itself temporarily of its pro-French sentiments. The symbols of Jacobinism disappeared; in fact, anything bearing a French imprint upon it was vilified. Proof of this is the meeting of the citizens of Pittsburgh held at the courthouse on Thursday, August 2, 1798; here a resolution was passed that created a committee to correspond with different districts to secure a man in Congress "free from foreign influence." The committee further reported that "it is absolutely necessary that our present representative [Albert Gallatin] be not returned to Congress." For the moment, expediency demanded that French-speaking and French-sympathizer Gallatin be removed from office.

Even Absalom Baird, member of the Democratic Society of Washington and prominent Republican, came under strong condemnation in 1798 when he was candidate for justice of the peace; the worst that could be said of him was the following: "... he had been uniformly among the strenuous opponents and censurers of our government, and has been and yet is of what is called the French Party. He was of a party who at midnight and for some hours after in a noisy manner raised a May pole in the town of Washington and to the American colors annexed red, blue and white ribbons." Even a man of the political strength of Absalom Baird could not stand up against the anti-French sentiment.

Former pro-French Republicans in Western Pennsylvania were

52 Moreau de St. Méry, op. cit., 253.
54 Pittsburgh Gazette, July 21, August 26, September 22, 1798.
55 Judge Addison to Judge Hall, July 6, 1798, in Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, IV, 544.
swept into the maelstrom of hatred for France as a result of the XYZ affair. People were carried away with war hysteria. Militia of Allegheny County pledged unreserved support for President Adams. Officers of the Westmoreland County militia held to the opinion that peace could be obtained “not by negotiation, but by the sword.” Innumerable letters of assurance were addressed to President Adams, promising support and loyalty, and letters from Adams found expression in the Gazette. Since most of the officers of Pittsburgh militia units were Federalists, they made political hay while the sun shone. Militia musters became recruiting endeavors for the Federalist Party.\footnote{Pittsburgh Gazette, April 28, July 21, August 2, 1798.}

Yet with all this anti-French war hysteria in Western Pennsylvania, Alexander Hamilton read the signs of the times in a different fashion. He was certain that the “Jacobins” of Western Pennsylvania and Virginia were preparing for revolt. He was reported to have exclaimed: “... a standing army was necessary, that the aspect of Virginia was threatening, and that he had the most correct and authentic information that the ferment in the western counties of Pennsylvania was greater than previous to the insurrection of 1794.” \footnote{Adams, Gallatin, 233; see also Hamilton, Works (Lodge), VII, 56, X, 329; John C. Miller, Alexander Hamilton, Portrait in Paradox (New York, 1959), 484-491.}

Despite Hamilton’s fears, the \textit{bonnet rouge}, French cockades, Liberty Poles, Gallic terms were beginning to become things of the past.

The rabid patriotism that flourished between the years of 1798 and 1800 subsided somewhat with the making of the Treaty of Morfontaine, commonly known as the Convention of 1800, which superseded the treaties of 1778 and thus formally released the United States from its defensive alliance with France. That pro-French sentiment existed long after 1800 in Pennsylvania is evidenced in the work of Duane in the \textit{Aurora} and by Israel in the \textit{Tree of Liberty}, but never again would this sentiment be of such a febrile nature, aping the symbols and ideas of Revolutionary France.